Today’s piece was prepared by Erin MacKintosh, MD and is based on a story from CNN, entitled “Autism linked to induced or augmented labor, study says”. <http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2013/08/12/autism-linked-to-induced-or-augmented-labor-study-says/?hpt=hp_t2>

This CNN article summarizes a retrospective study published in JAMA Pediatrics that describes an association between induced and augmented labor and subsequent diagnosis of autism. A birth and school record review of 625,000 children showed increased risk for autism in boys whose mothers’ labor had been both augmented and induced (35% more likely than infants whose mothers had neither), induction only (18%), and augmentation only (15%). For girls, while there was significant increased risk for augmented labors (21%), there was not a difference when labors were induced and augmented, or induced only. There was not a difference in risk found between vaginal and caesarean deliveries.

While the article appropriately clearly states that the study does not show a cause-and-effect relationship between these interventions and autism and emphasizes that the researchers did not discriminate across degree or type of autism impairment, it fails to caution that this information should not be used to make clinical decisions, as the study authors have clearly advised.  The article notes some potential confounding factors not accounted for, such as paternal age, maternal medications, and varying methods of induction or augmentation (e.g. mechanical vs pharmaceutical interventions), but neglects other possible confounding factors and study design limitations, such as birth order, conditions leading to induction/augmentation, or events of labor related to augmentation/induction.

**RESOURCES ON AUTISM:**

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

(regarding this particular study: <http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science-news/study-links-inducingaugmenting-labor-modestly-higher-autism-risk>)

<http://asatonline.org/> *Provides guidance on the degree of evidence-basis behind popular treatment & prevention approaches*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!